(b) The matter was examined and it was decided not to make any change, for the present, in the level of abatement and excise duty rates on drugs. General Small Scale Industries (SSI) exemption is also available for the manufacturers of drugs.

(c) In view of (a) and (b) above, does not arise.

Time limit for setting up of industries in Kutch District

1542. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Gujarat has represented to extend the time limit for setting up new industries in Kutch District till December, 2007;

(b) if so, whether the Government have considered the representation positively; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, whether Government would consider the same positively so as to help the backward, remote, drought prone area of Kutch?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Taking all material facts into consideration, the Central Government have decided not to extend the time limit, for setting of new units for being eligible for excise duty exemption, beyond 31.12.2005.

Bank branches in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh

1543. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of branches set up in rural areas by Nationalised Banks in the country during the last three years particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Nationalised Bank-wise, State-wise ;

(b) whether Government and the Reserve Bank of India have issued instruction and guidelines to Nationalised and non-Nationalised banks to open more branches in rural areas particularly in small villages and towns; and

(c) if so, the outcome thereof and how far rural people have been benefited?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) The details of the number of